

Yuma County Department of Public Works Roll Material Source (AZA 31978)

Dear Interested Party:

Please be advised that an Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared (EA-AZ-320-2005-010) for a proposed Free Use Permit (FUP) to Yuma County Department of Public Works. This EA is a public document, and it is available for your review and comment. The proposed action analyzed in the EA would include portions of the following described public lands:

Gila and Salt River Meridian, Yuma County, Arizona

T. 7 S., R. 17 W.,
sec. 34, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ and SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$.

The area described contains approximately 80.0 acres.

The intent of this EA is to analyze site specific environmental effects of a FUP for the removal of 600,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel from approximately 40 acres of the existing pit and an additional 40 acres of previously undisturbed lands north of Roll, Yuma County, over a 10-year term.. The material would be used for maintenance projects on County roads over the next 10 years. The no action alternative would not authorize the proposed project. The proposed action is in conformance with the Yuma District Resource Management Plan (RMP) and its Record of Decision, as amended (May 1986 and February 1987).

Copies of the EA are available upon request from, and written comments may be submitted to: Stephen Fusilier, 2555 E. Gila Ridge Road, Yuma, AZ 85365, (928) 317-3296. This EA has also been posted on the Arizona State Office's web home page http://www.az.blm.gov/env_docs/proj_list.htm. The deadline for receipt of comments is August 31st. Public comments are welcome and encouraged.

By law, the names and addresses of those commenting are available for public review during regular business hours. However, individual commentors may request that their name and/or address be withheld from the record. These requests will be honored to the extent allowable by law. If you wish your name and/or address withheld, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment letter. All comments from organizations or businesses will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Heick
Field Manager



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Yuma Field Office
2555 East Gila Ridge Road
Yuma, AZ 85365
www.az.blm.gov

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

For

EA No. AZ-320-2005-010

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Yuma Field Office, has analyzed a proposal from Yuma County for a Free Use Permit (FUP) for the removal of an estimated 600,000 cubic yards of mineral materials from BLM lands near Roll in Yuma County, AZ. The material would be used for maintenance projects on County roads over the next 10 years. The FUP would be issued under the authority of Title III of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, as amended, and the Materials Act (Act of June 31, 1947, 30 U.S.C 601, *et seq.*). The proposed action and the No Action Alternative, are described within the attached Environmental Assessment (EA) No. AZ-320-2005-010.

The EA is tiered to and in conformance with the Yuma District Resource Management Plan (RMP) and its Record of Decision, as amended (May 1986 and February 1987). The above referenced documents may be viewed at the Yuma Field Office during normal business hours.

The proposed action would assure that no significant adverse impacts would occur to the human environment in the following areas: Air Quality, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Cultural Resources, Environmental Justice, Farm Lands (Prime or Unique), Floodplain, Hazardous or Solid Waste, Native American Religious Concerns, Non-Native Invasive Species, Threatened or Endangered Species, Water Quality (Ground or Surface), Wetlands/Riparian Zones, Wild and Scenic Rivers, or Wilderness.

The proposed action does not significantly affect energy supply, distribution, and/or use and therefore a Statement of Adverse Energy Impact is not required.

On the basis of the information contained in the EA, and all other information available to me as is summarized above, it is my determination that the Proposed Action does not constitute a major Federal Action affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is unnecessary and will not be prepared.

Rebecca Heick
Yuma Field Manager

Date

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
EA-AZ-320-2005-010**

FOR

**YUMA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
ROLL MATERIAL SOURCE
AZA 31978**

**TOWNSHIP 7 SOUTH, RANGE 17 WEST, SECTION 34
YUMA COUNTY, ARIZONA**

Prepared For:

**Bureau of Land Management
Yuma Field Office
2555 East Gila Ridge Road
Yuma, AZ 85365-2240**

Prepared By:

**Himes Consulting LLC
3272 West Venice Way
Chandler, AZ 85226**

July 2005

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Yuma County has requested a Free Use Permit (FUP) from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for the removal of an estimated 600,000 cubic yards of mineral materials from BLM lands near Roll in Yuma County, AZ. The material would be used for maintenance projects on County roads over the next 10 years.

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The purpose of the action is to enable Yuma County to continue to mine mineral materials and expand the existing Roll pit for use on Yuma County road maintenance projects.

1.3 CONFORMANCE WITH LAND USE PLANS

The proposed action is in conformance with the Yuma District Resource Management Plan (RMP) and its Record of Decision, as amended (May 1986 and February 1987).

1.4 RELATED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS (EIS), ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS (EA), AND OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is tiered to the Yuma District Programmatic EA, No. AZ-050-78-26.

2.0 PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 PROPOSED ACTION

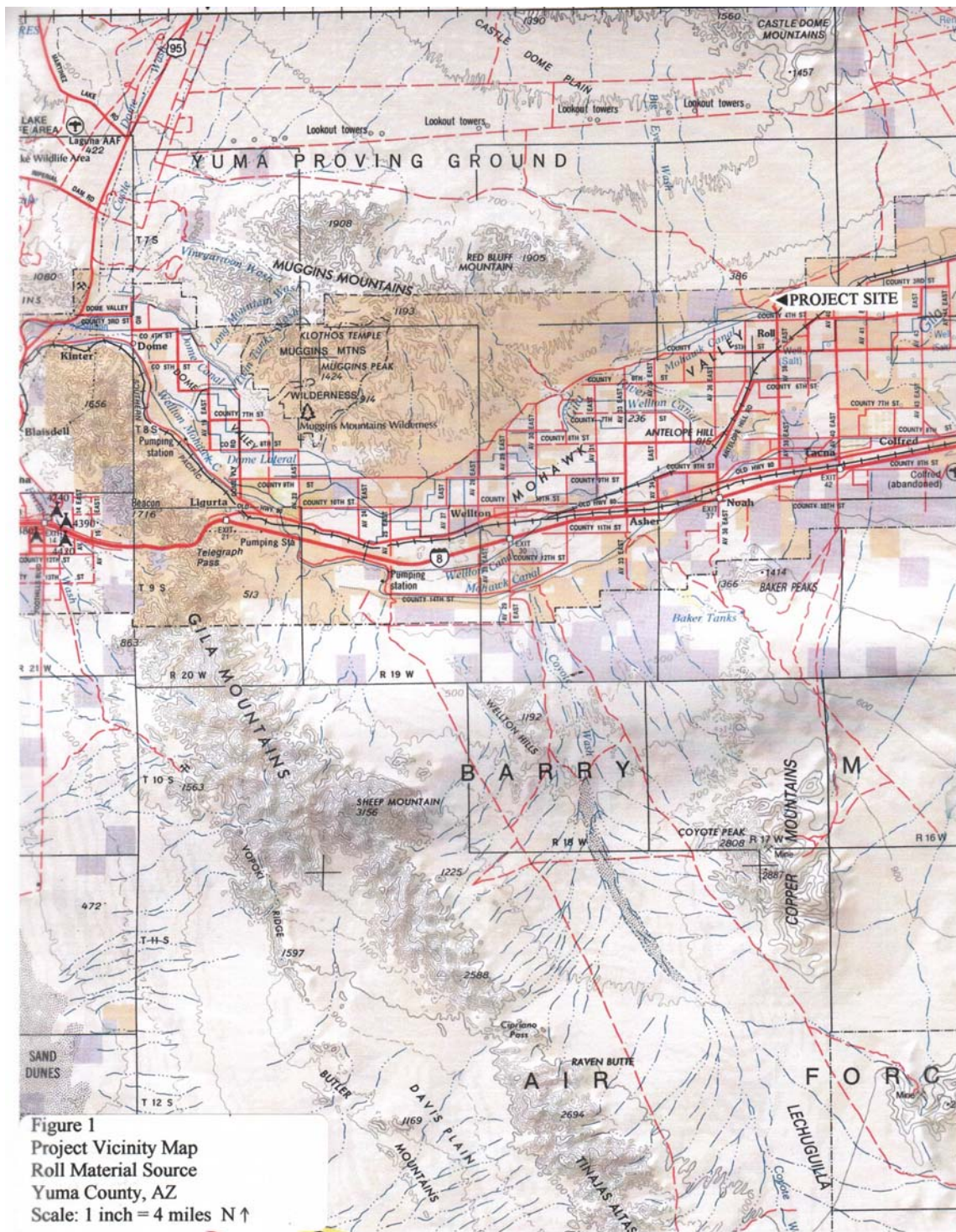
Yuma County has requested a Free Use Permit to remove approximately 600,000 cubic yards of sand & gravel from approximately 40 acres of the existing pit and an additional 40 acres of previously undisturbed lands north of Roll, Yuma County, over a 10-year term. A vicinity map of the project area is provided in Figure 1. The affected lands are described as follows:

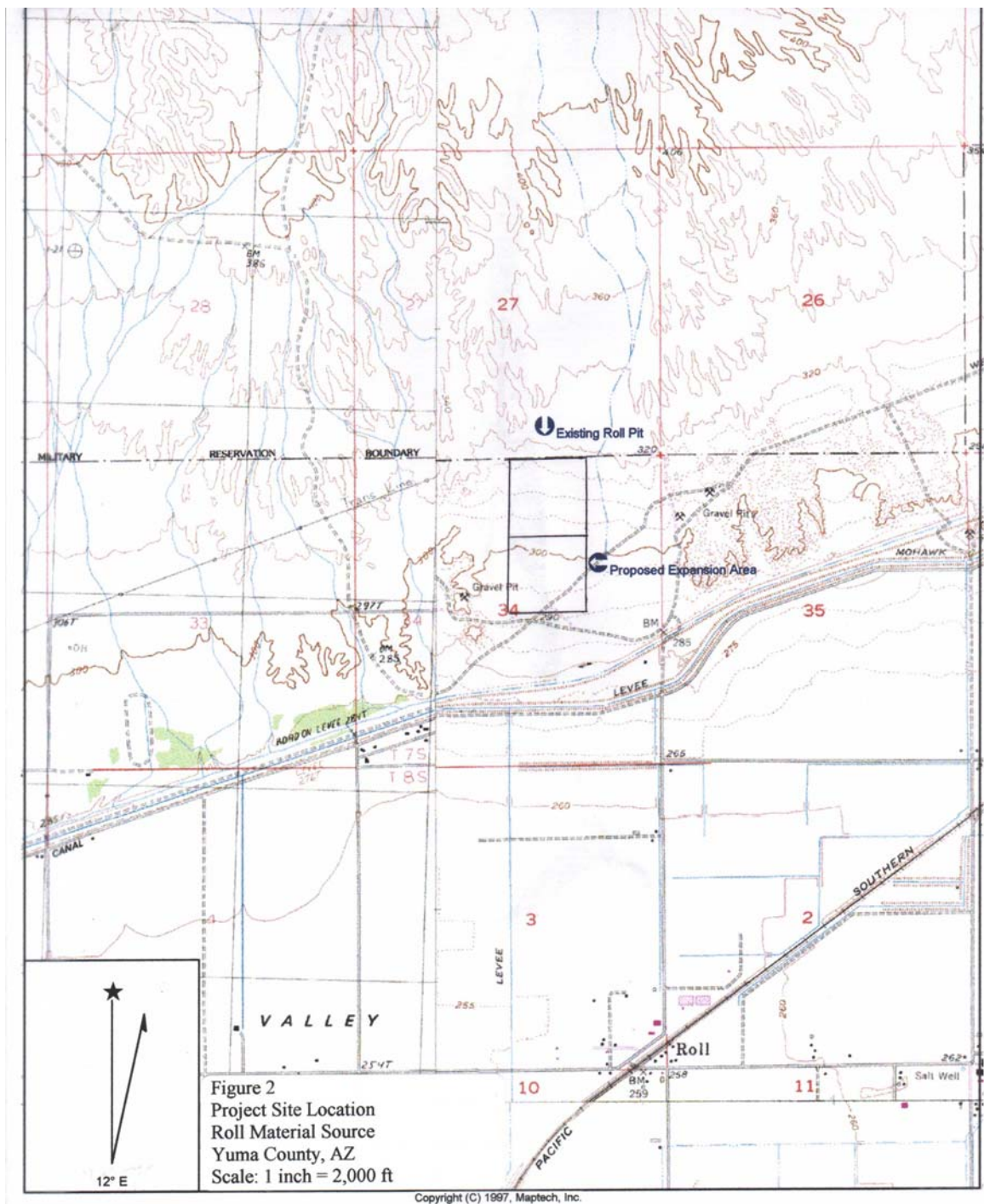
Gila and Salt River Meridian, Yuma County, Arizona
T. 7 S., R. 17 W.,
Sec. 34, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$; SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$.

The area described contains approximately 80.0 acres.

The proposed permit area would encompass 80 acres, more or less. The location of the project site is shown in Figure 2. The project consists of mining materials, processing and stockpiling materials, and transporting to the maintenance location using the existing access road. If approved, Yuma County would be required to comply with the following mitigating measures:

1. Any archaeological, historical, or paleontological remains discovered by the permittee, or any person working on the permittee's behalf, on public or Federal land shall be immediately reported to the Authorized Officer. All operations in the immediate area of such discovery shall be suspended until written authorization to proceed is issued by the Authorized Officer.
2. All firewood (vegetative material greater than three inches in diameter) shall be stockpiled in a place readily accessible by truck. The remaining brush shall be piled in piles less than three feet tall and no greater than 10 ft in diameter. These piles shall be placed in the reclaimed portions of the permitted areas.
3. The permittee shall furnish and apply water or use other means satisfactory to the Authorized Officer for dust control.





4. The site shall be maintained in a sanitary condition at all times; waste materials shall be disposed of promptly at an appropriate waste disposal site. "Waste" is defined as all discarded matter including, but not limited to, human waste, trash, garbage, refuse, oil drums, petroleum products, ashes, and equipment.
5. Public hazards caused by the operations shall be prevented by signs and/or appropriate fencing.
6. All applicable terms and stipulations of Standard Form 3600-9 and standard Yuma District material removal stipulations will apply.
7. Upon cessation of operations, the pit shall be scarified to a depth of 12 inches by rippers spaced 12 inches apart, in order to reduce compaction. Pit walls shall be maintained or graded to a final slope of 3:1 (horizontal : vertical).
8. If a desert tortoise is found in a project area, activities should be modified to avoid injuring or harming it. If activities cannot be modified, tortoises shall be moved from harm's way. Upon discovery of a desert tortoise in harm's way, the authorized biologist shall translocate the animal the minimum distance possible (but not more than two miles) within appropriate habitat to ensure its safety from death, injury, or collection associated with the project or other activities. The authorized biologist shall be allowed some discretion to ensure that survival of each relocated desert tortoise is likely. Desert tortoises shall not be translocated to lands outside the administration of the Federal government without the written permission of the landowner.

Only biologists authorized by the BLM and the appropriate State Fish and Game Department shall handle desert tortoises. Handling procedures for desert tortoises shall adhere to protocols outlined in the *Management Plan for the Sonoran Desert Population of the Desert Tortoise in Arizona* (December 1996).

2.2 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Alternatives to the proposed action consist of the No Action Alternative, which consists of not issuing a Free Use Permit to Yuma County for the Roll pit by the BLM. Yuma County would not be able to repair County roads on an emergency basis from material at this source.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.1 GENERAL SETTING

The Roll Material Source project site occurs south of the Castle Dome Mountains, southeast of Red Bluff Mountains, north of the Mohawk Canal, and approximately three miles north of the Gila River. Elevation within the undeveloped portions of the project site is approximately 300 ft above mean sea level (msl). The Yuma Proving Ground occurs immediately north of the project site. The existing material source operation occurs in the northern half of the project site.

The existing Roll Material Source has been operated since the 1970's. The northern half of the project site is entirely previously-disturbed from mining, stockpiling, and grading operations. The proposed 40-acre expansion area is undisturbed. Topography in the undeveloped portion of the site is relatively flat, with a slight downward slope to the south. Land use within the project site includes sand and gravel mining, open space, and wildlife habitat. Land use in adjacent areas include military operations to the north and a County landfill to the east.

Climate in the project area is typical of the arid southwest, which is characterized by long, hot summers and mild winters. Average annual rainfall is approximately three inches.

3.2 CULTURAL/ARCHAEOLOGICAL

Previously recorded cultural resource sites within a one mile radius of the proposed project area include two prehistoric lithic scatters. Transcon Environmental conducted a Class III cultural resources survey of the project area in October 2004. No archaeological sites or isolated artifacts/features were found in the proposed project area (Transcon Environmental 2004).

3.3 VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The project area is within the Visual Resource Management Class III. Class III lands may contain contrasts to the basic landscape elements caused by the management action which are evident but remain subordinate to the existing landscape. The visual setting in

the project area is dominated by the Castle Dome Mountains to the north, Red Bluff Mountain to the northwest, the Mohawk Canal to the south, the existing operations at the material source, and the existing County landfill to the east. The existing mining operations are not visible from Interstate 8.

3.4 VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE

Vegetation within the undeveloped portions of the project site is characterized by paloverde (*Cercidium floridum*), ironwood (*Olneya tesota*), catclaw acacia (*Acacia greggii*), four-wing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*), brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), creosotebush (*Larrea tridentata*), and crucifixion thorn (*Canotia holocantha*). Salt cedar (*Tamarix* sp.) was observed within some of the disturbed portions of the existing pit.

Wildlife and/or wildlife sign observed in the project area include mourning doves (*Zenaida macroura*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), and quail (*Callipepla gambeli*). Wildlife typical of Lower Colorado River subdivision also anticipated to occur in the area includes coyote (*Canis latrans*), round-tailed ground squirrel (*Spermophilus tereticaudus*), desert pocket mouse (*Perognathus penicillatus*), and a variety of snakes and lizards.

3.5 THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) was contacted for a list of federally-listed, proposed, and candidate species which may occur in Yuma County. The BLM's Sensitive Species List (October 2000) of sensitive species which occur in the Yuma Resource Area was also reviewed. The Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) was contacted to access the Heritage Data Management System. Based on these species lists and existing habitat, there are no federally-listed species which occur within the project site (Himes Consulting 2004).

3.6 SOILS/MINERALS

Both the surface and subsurface minerals are under federal ownership. The National Resources Conservation Service has mapped soils within the project site as Ligurta-Cristobal complex and as an existing borrow pit (Soil Conservation Service 1980). The Ligurta soils comprise about 50 percent of the complex and the Cristobal soil about 35 percent. The Cristobal soil is similar to the Ligurta soil, but is 30 to 90 percent coarse fragments. Tremant gravelly loam, Antho sandy loam, Carrizo very gravelly sand, and

small areas of calcareous, very gravelly loams comprise the remaining 15 percent of the complex. Typically, Ligurta and Cristobal soils have a surface layer of very pale brown very gravelly loam about 2 inches thick. The surface soils within the 40 acres of the existing pit have been previously removed during mining operations.

3.6 GRAZING

No grazing occurs within or near the proposed project area (Mr. Roger Oyler, BLM, personal communication, 2004).

3.7 WILD HORSES AND BURROS

Wild horses and burros do not occur within or near the project area as they have been recently removed (Mr. Roger Oyler, BLM, personal communication, 2004). Evidence of wild horses or burros was not observed during site surveys on October 12, 2004.

3.8 FLOODPLAINS

The easternmost border (approximately 50 to 400 feet) of the proposed project site, including the existing pit, is located within the 100-year floodplain according to the FEMA Floodplain Map (FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map Panel No. 0400990600B). The existing Roll pit has been active since the 1970's. Past operations at the Roll pit may have altered the active floodplain in the project area.

3.9 AIR QUALITY

Air quality in the project vicinity is usually high due to the remoteness from urban areas, but may decline for short periods because of blowing dust from unpaved roadways and agricultural burning in the vicinity. The project site is not located within a PM₁₀ non-attainment area.

3.10 HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

No hazardous materials were observed during the site visit in October 2004.

3.11 INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

There are four invasive, non-native species of concern in the vicinity of the proposed project: Sahara mustard (*Brassica tourneforti*), buffelgrass (*Pennisetum cillare*), Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*), and tamarisk (*Tamarix* sp.). Tamarisk trees occur within the existing Roll pit, in the northern portion of the project area. No other noxious weeds or invasive species were observed within the proposed project site.

3.12 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice directs that programs, policies, and activities not have a disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effect on minority and low-income populations. Low-income and minority populations are present within Yuma County. The community of Roll, mainly an agricultural center, is located approximately 1.5 miles south of the proposed project site, which may include low-income and/or minority households.

3.13 NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

The Bureau of Land Management has initiated consultation for this project. The results of this consultation will be incorporated into the final Environmental Assessment.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

4.1 IMPACTS FROM THE PROPOSED ACTION

The following critical elements were not present or would not be affected by the proposed action:

- Wetlands/riparian
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
- Prime or unique farmlands
- Wild and scenic rivers
- Grazing
- Cultural resources
- Threatened or endangered species
- Wilderness
- Wild Horses or Burros

4.1.1 CULTURAL/ARCHAEOLOGICAL

No impacts would occur to cultural or archaeological resources from the proposed action as none occur within the project area (Transcon Environmental 2004).

4.1.2 VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The proposed action would be consistent with the objectives for Visual Resource Management Class III. Proposed changes to the existing visual setting would expand existing operations to the south and would remain subordinate to the existing landscape.

4.1.3 VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE

Existing vegetation within the undisturbed portion of the project site would be removed during the mining process. Once mining is completed, reclamation of the material source would be scarified to allow natural revegetation. Native cactus, including barrel cactus, would be avoided to the degree possible. If avoidance is not possible, then these plants would be transplanted to adjacent public lands outside of the project area or other BLM-approved locations.

Wildlife within the proposed project area would be displaced during proposed project activities. Wildlife would be anticipated to return to the project area following reclamation and revegetation of the area.

4.1.4 THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

As there are no federally-listed threatened or endangered plant and species which occur within or near the project site, no impacts to federally-listed species would occur from the proposed project.

Development of the proposed project site would impact 40 acres of potential foraging habitat for four BLM sensitive bat species: the big free-tailed bat, the cave myotis, California leaf-nosed bat, and the pocketed free-tailed bat. Based on the abundance of similar habitat types within the surrounding areas, impacts would not be anticipated to adversely impact these species on a regional basis.

Development of the project would reduce 40 acres of potential habitat for four BLM sensitive species: the cheeseweed moth lacewing, the chuckwalla, the rosy boa, and the loggerhead shrike. Based on the abundance of similar habitat types within the surrounding areas, project impacts would not be anticipated to adversely impact the species on a regional basis.

4.1.5 SOILS/MINERALS

Construction and operation of the proposed action could result in the disturbance and alteration of an additional 40 acres of undisturbed native soil and underlying minerals. Impacts to native soil and minerals would result from the clearing of protective vegetation, excavation of materials, and the associated loss of soil productivity in undisturbed areas.

Dust control would be provided on cleared areas on an as-needed basis to reduce dust generation and off-site deposition of soils from the project site. Scarification of project areas during reclamation would reduce impacts to soils over the long-term.

4.1.6 GRAZING

As no grazing occurs in the project vicinity, no loss of Animal Unit Months would occur from implementation of the proposed action.

4.1.7 WILD HORSES AND BURROS

As wild horses and burros do not occur in the project vicinity, no impacts would occur to wild horses and burros from the proposed action.

4.1.8 FLOODPLAINS

The proposed action would temporarily impact the designated floodplain area through excavation. The excavated areas are anticipated to refill with material from stormwater flows over time, thereby restoring floodplain conditions.

4.1.9 AIR QUALITY

Short-term impacts to air quality would occur locally during excavation, processing, and hauling. Dust control would reduce these impacts during operation. Impacts to local air quality would be reduced over the long-term by the reclamation activities at the site. The project site is not located within a PM₁₀ non-attainment area.

4.1.10 HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

No hazardous materials were observed during site surveys of the project area. Operations would require the use of small amounts of hazardous materials (such as oil, grease, and anti-freeze). However, good housekeeping procedures would be used during operations to minimize the potential for a spill. All materials would be removed following completion of operations.

4.1.11 INVASIVE, NONNATIVE SPECIES

Tamarisk, an invasive, nonnative species of concern, occurs within the existing Roll pit, in the northern portion of the project area. With expansion of the excavated area, additional tamarisk trees are anticipated to encroach into the areas proposed for disturbance due to increased water retention. Tamarisk is not anticipated to encroach into adjacent undisturbed areas as the species was not observed within undisturbed areas surrounding the existing pit.

4.1.12 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

As the Roll pit has been in operation since the 1970s, as the existing and proposed expansion of the operation is not visible from the community of Roll to the south, and due to the relative distance from residences, low-income and minority households which may occur within the community of Roll would not be adversely impacted by the proposed action.

4.1.13 NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

The Bureau of Land Management has initiated consultation for this project. The results of this consultation will be incorporated into the final Environmental Assessment.

4.2 IMPACTS FROM THE NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Implementation of the No Action Alternative would result in a Free Use Permit being denied for the project site and no disturbance would occur within the proposed project area. As the need for materials for repair of County roads in the vicinity of Roll would not be fulfilled, Yuma County would need to find other material sources.

4.3 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The proposed action would result in the extraction of up to 600,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel from the proposed project site over a 10-year period. The proposed action would also add up to 40 acres of new disturbance to the previous disturbances in Yuma County. With this and other similar actions proposed by Yuma County, up to a total of approximately 110 acres of new disturbance would occur and potentially up to 1,600,000 cubic yards of material would be removed. New disturbance would add cumulatively to short-term impacts in the project vicinity, including impacts to soils, vegetation & wildlife, visual resources, and localized air quality. Reclamation would occur at the end of mining operations, which would aid in the long-term recovery of the project site. Implementation of the proposed action is therefore not expected to result in adverse cumulative impacts over the long-term.

5.0 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

The following persons and agencies were contacted or consulted during preparation of this EA:

Federal

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Rob Wilson

U.S. Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management, Yuma Field Office:

Stephen Fusilier, Team Lead, Lands and Minerals

Matthew Plis, Geologist

Sandra Arnold, Archaeologist

Jennifer Green, Natural Resource Specialist

Karen Reichhart, NEPA Coordinator

Roger Oyler, Rangeland Management Specialist

Ron Morfin, Visual Resource Management Specialist

Jeff Young, Wildlife Biologist

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

State

Arizona Department of Game and Fish

Arizona State Historic Preservation Office

REFERENCES

Arizona Interagency Desert Tortoise Team. December 1996. Management Plan for the Sonoran Desert Population of the Desert Tortoise in Arizona.

Brown, David E., 1994. Biotic Communities, Southwestern United States and Northwestern Mexico. University of Utah Press; Salt Lake City.

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USDA Soil Conservation Service. 1980. Soil Survey of Yuma-Wellton Area. Parts of Yuma County, Arizona and Imperial County, California. In Cooperation with the Arizona Agricultural Experiment Station and the California Agricultural Experiment Station.

Transcon Environmental. 2004. A Class III Cultural Resources Survey of Bureau of Land Management Administered Land in the Vicinity of Roll, Yuma County, AZ. BLM Cultural Resource Project Record No. BLM-AZ-050-2004-078.

Federal Emergency Management Agency. Flood Insurance Rate Maps. www.fema.gov/mapstore